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SEMITIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN CULTURE.

[Translated by Prof. G. H. Schodde from Benfey's *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, p. 701 s. q.]

In the present century, especially in its second quarter, the earnest attempt has been made for the first time to study the Hebrew language with the same objective and unprejudiced spirit that characterizes other philological research, and to judge the sacred Scriptures according to those laws of criticism and hermeneutics which have been found valid in connection with profane writings; in one word, to measure the Jewish people and their development with the same measure by which we are accustomed to measure the development of other nationalities.

And in the hands of conscientious German philologists it immediately became an evident fact that this method in no way conflicted with the reverence which the Scriptures in so eminent a sense deserve; but that, on the contrary, through the application of this purely human measure their importance grew not a little, although in another sense than the religious. We find in the most unprejudiced scholars in this department the deepest recognition of the wisdom of life contained in these books, a recognition, namely, of the conviction that true happiness in life depends on moral qualities and religious life alone, and also an acknowledgment of all the greatness, grandeur and goodness which mark the contents and history of these books; a recognition of the wonderful treasure which through these writings have been made accessible to mankind; a recognition of this source of salvation for the past as well as for the future generations, that enter into the circle of culture whose demarcation lines, for their most important features, depend upon the teachings of these books. They feel and acknowledge that a security for a never failing, ever-growing culture lies in this union (marriage) of the Jewish soul, as this has been so entirely a living reality in the biblical books of the Old and the New Testaments. Alone neither of the two would be able to prove itself effectual (*sich gewähren*). The Semitic, or rather Jewish tendency, which subordinates the great diversities of spiritual life to a single one, but that in truth a most deep and potent motive power, namely the religious, leads to a disregard of the diversities, if it would attain sole supremacy, then the arts and sciences would develop only within a very limited circle, the whole fulness and variety of life would not be influenced by it at all or but very little; the whole life blood, so to say, would remain in the heart, so that the members could not grow into full life, and the whole existence would be like a desert with but a single oasis in the middle. The Indo-European mind, however, with its marked tendency toward the co-ordinate development of all the spiritual forms to the greatest activity and variety, would drive all life blood into the members, but would, so to say, empty the heart; the arts and sciences would develop an extraordinary richness, but would be governed by no single and uniform principle, so that they, as proved to be in the case of the Greeks, would soon, after a brief prosperity, have fallen into decay. The Jewish reduction of the diversities to the unity and the Indo-European expansion of the unity into the diversity supplement each other in a manner which sets the boundaries for each and prevents their overstepping these and thus resulting in an abnormal totality of life (*gesamtleben*). By the introduction of the Semitic, or more particularly, the Jewish spirit, into the Indo-Germanic, or more particularly the Germanic, a

damper, so to say, was put on the latter, which, without forcing on it the Semitic aridity (*dürre*) prevented the evil results of its superabundance of vitality. It is a question which admits of no doubt whatever that it was the deeply thoughtful spirit of the Germanic people which, in the sixteenth century, saved, in the first instance, the Christian, and then the whole world from a destruction and stupor (*versumpfung*) such as classical antiquity had not experienced even in its darkest days; but it is equally a matter which admits of no doubt that the principle weapon with which this victory and deliverance was won, was the translation of the Bible, by means of which Luther overcame the immorality among the people and created a firm foundation for the unfolding of a moral and religious life.

The Jews did not, like the majority of historical nations, step down from the stage of life after the destruction of their national life. Notwithstanding the loss of the three chief elements of a national existence, a peculiar language, an individual state and one's own inherited fatherland, they have, solely through the preservation of their common religion, maintained themselves to the present day in a union and connection which, according to the political circumstances under which they live scattered over the whole world, varies from the character of a purely religious association through that of a family to that of almost a real nationality.

If this circumstance of their history alone already distinguishes them in a peculiar manner from all other nations that have lost their individuality, then this difference is made still more marked by the manner in which they, after their dispersion, deported themselves as well in reference to particular surroundings as to the developments of history. They have, on the one hand, continued a life, which was indeed within a circumscribed scope, but nevertheless worthy of consideration, a spiritual life resting upon their own traditions. On the other hand, partly on the basis of an individual, and partly on the basis of their common traditional standpoint, they took part in a greater or less degree, in the historical development of the nations among whom they had made their abode. Although they only seldom, and then from an individual standpoint, take active part in the life of these nations, they all the more remain a large audience who not only in a passive manner—which is indeed most frequently the case—are drawn into co-operation, but who sometimes also assume the role of the chorus in a Greek tragedy, who pronounce open judgment on the acts and actors from their standpoint.

THE EXPLANATION OF NUMERICAL DIFFICULTIES.

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It is greatly to be regretted that the arguments made in support of cherished opinions are sometimes so weak and fallacious; and what is no less to be regretted is the fact that many of these arguments have been allowed so long to pass unchallenged. An instance of the arguments referred to is found in the means frequently employed to remove objections to some of the biblical statements as to numbers;—*First*, of numbers so large as to appear incredible, as in 1 Sam. vi., 19, where the writer tells us that, for looking into the ark, fifty thousand and